

# *Breaking Down the Walls?* Interview with film director, Andrzej Krakowski\*

By Anita Zawisza

In a thought-provoking event titled "Breaking Down the Walls: Old and New Barriers to Social Cohesion in Arts, Culture, and Media," jointly organized at the Museum of Modern Art Warsaw, on May 11, 2023-by the Faculty of Journalism, Information, and Book Studies at the University of Warsaw and the Media Diversity Institute Global, the focus was squarely on the dynamic interplay between the arts, culture, and media sectors and their potential to cultivate social cohesion.

Delving deep into the underpinnings of contemporary democratic expression, the event critically examined the mechanisms conducive to societal and technological transformation.

The event titled "Breaking Down the Walls" undertakes a critical exploration of the factors that underpin contemporary democratic expression, paving the way for societal and technological evolution. It delves into the significance of deliberative communications, where ideas are exchanged with respect, and explores how involving communities in discussions, events, and decision-making processes can foster greater social cohesion while countering polarization and misinformation.

The event's discussion dissected the creative sector's pivotal role in upholding freedom, combatting polarization, and championing deliberation within the unique context of Poland. The overarching question it addresses is how artists and cultural figures can actively contribute to the preservation of democracy.

The panelists as well as the gathered audience confirmed by their presence that democracy begins with small actions. Moreover, culture and media are never as close to each other as when freedom (of speech, creative, etc.) is threatened. Through the organization of a public event and a joint debate, we were able to make at least a small contribution to improving social cohesion, promoting deliberative communication and, above all, the quality of [democracy](#).

In connection with the event, I had the opportunity to conduct a short interview with Andrzej Krakowski a polish-American film director, producer, academic teacher, writer and cartoonist who lives in the US. His contribution to the event was immense and at the same time extremely interesting. A. Krakowski spoke about his experience being expelled from Poland during anti-Semitic purges in 1968 and his cultural roots.

The interview with the director provides a picture of the current Polish film industry and its contribution to the international film market. Professor Krakowski has film experience in

both the Polish and international markets. The topic adequately corresponds to the ongoing, international european film research conducted under the Reboot project.

**Anita Zawisza:** what differences do you notice between filmmaking in Poland and US?

**Andrzej Krakowski:** These are colossal differences. Producers in Poland depend on government finances. American filmmakers have no subsidies. We have to fight for every dollar ourselves or put up our own money. Secondly, there is a saying: Think globally, act locally. In Poland, films are made in Polish themes for Poles and this does not go abroad. This is what no one outside the borders understands. Different for Americans who take a universal approach - globally but also for business reasons. „Wołyń” dir. Wojciech Smarzowski – is a great example - that no one outside of Poland understands.

**Anita Zawisza:** Do you see any promotion of European film in the U.S.? Does the European film have an audience in American theaters?

**Andrzej Krakowski:** The first thing is cultural differences. If film made by an American studio doesn't make \$100 million through its first weekend, it gets written off because marketing is so expensive that it doesn't pay off. A European film that will bring in 15 million for 1.5 years (lifetime) - is a success. Americans do not read subtitles and European films are not dubbed. My wife and I mostly watch European films because they largely reflect our sensibilities.

**Anita Zawisza:** One last question about women in cinema. Do you notice diversity in terms of the gender of American filmmakers?

**Andrzej Krakowski:** Recent statistics report that in 2022 in the US, seven percent of films were directed by women. In 2021 it was eight percent. In Poland in 2022 it was 28% and in France 31% of films made by women.

During the discussion, Krakowski also appealed to the audience to listen to each other and be more proactive in solving problems. “The most effective way is to do. Let’s not push for change, let’s make change”- he concluded.

**Andrzej Krakowski**, a polish-American film director, producer, teacher, writer and cartoonist, permanently resides in the US.

References:

T. Sakzewski (2023), *Breaking down the walls: artists and journalists send a strong warning of the dangers of complacency*, <https://www.media-diversity.org/breaking-down-the-walls-artists-and-journalists-send-a-strong-warning-of-the-dangers-of-complacency/> [online][access: 27.05.2023].

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